

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

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P 221705Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4899

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 5119

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LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ, U.S.

SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS OF 408TH PRC MEETING

1. NEGOTIATORS' VISIT: AMBASSADOR SAID THAT U.S. NEGOTIATORS WOULD ARRIVE IN PANAMA FOR THEIR NEXT VISIT ON SEPTEMBER 4 OR 5. THE GOVERNOR ASKED THAT AMBASSADOR BUNKER BE REMINDED THAT CANAL ZONE EMPLOYEES WOULD LIKE TO HAVE HIM SPEAK TO THEM.

2. NON-ALIGNED GROUP. AMBASSADOR REPORTED THAT PANAMA WILL BE ATTENDING MEETING OF NON-ALIGNED GROUP (NAG) IN LIMA BEGINNING AUGUST 25. MINISTER-NEGOTIATOR TACK WILL HEAD PANAMA'S DELEGATION. WE EXPECT PANAMANIAN WILL SEEK FULL MEMBERSHIP IN THE NAG. THE AMBASSADOR SAID APPARENTLY THEY THINK THIS IS ONE WAY OF PUTTING PRESSURE ON US, BUT IT WILL NOT BE EFFECTIVE AND COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON U.S. PUBLIC OPINION. PANAMA WILL EVENTUALLY BE UNDER PRESSURE FROM OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP TO CONFORM TO NAG POSITIONS ON VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. HE ALSO MENTIONED THAT THERE IS TALK OF PANAMA'S ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND PEKING. IT IS HARD TO DISSUADE THE PANAMANIAN FROM ESTABLISHING FORMAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THESE COUNTRIES WHEN THE U.S. IS DEEPLY ENGAGED IN ACHIEVING DETENTE. ANOTHER REASON FOR TROOIJOS' DECISION IS THAT HE FEELS HE MUST PLACATE AND MANAGE HIS LEFTIST CONSTITUENCY. THIS HAS SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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TRUTH IN IT. THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE HOPED TO DISCUSS THE MATTER

WITH TORRIJOS IN TERMS OF PANAMA'S NATIONAL INTEREST.

3. WATER RATES. SINCE THE LAST PRC MEETING THE AMBASSADOR HAS SPOKEN TO TORRIJOS WHO IN TURN SAID HE WOULD CONSULT WITH HIS WATER TECHNICIANS. TORRIJOS PROMISED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE AMBASSADOR FOLLOWING THESE CONSULTATIONS. THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT SEPTEMBER 1 WAS THE DEADLINE SET FOR MOVING AHEAD WITH THE DECISION CONCERNING WATER RATES. HE WOULD LIKE TO TELL I.D.A.A.N. OFFICIALS ABOUT THE PROSPECTIVE ACTIONS ON WATER RATES.

4. CANAL COMPANY UNDER FINANCIAL STRAIN. DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, SAID THE GOVERNOR, TRAFFIC PROJECTIONS HAVE BEEN DECLINING. THE PRIMARY CAUSES ARE THE WORLD RECESSION AND THE REOPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL. THIS YEAR'S DECLINE HAS BEEN MORE RAPID THAN LAST YEAR'S. CONCURRENTLY COSTS HAVE RISEN DUE TO INFLATION WHICH HAS INCREASED FASTER THAN ANTICIPATED. WHILE THE NEW MEASUREMENT SYSTEM WHICH HAS BEEN PROPOSED (TO DRAW REVENUES FROM CONTAINER CARGOES CARRIED ABOVE DECK) WILL HELP, IT WILL NOT PROVIDE SUFFICIENT REVENUES TO COVER THE DEFICITS. HEARINGS WILL BE HELD ON THE NEW SYSTEM OCTOBER 6, AND IT IS SCHEDULED TO GO INTO EFFECT FEBRUARY 1, 1976.

5. SCN-FM RADIO. SCN RADIO TECHNICIANS ARE MOVING FROM 91.3 KH TO 91.5 KH AS A BROADCASTING FREQUENCY FOR THE NEW FM STATION WHICH WENT ON THE AIR TWO WEEKS AGO. IT IS BELIEVED THIS WILL ELIMINATE THE INTERFERENCE WITH THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA CORPORATION'S FM STATION. THE AMBASSADOR AGREED BUT POINTED OUT THAT RADIO LIBERTAD'S STATION IN DAVID HAS 91.5 ASSIGNED TO IT. SINCE DAVID IS 200 MILES AWAY IT IS DOUBTFUL THERE WILL BE ANY IMMEDIATE PRACTICAL PROBLEM.

6. BOYD-ROOSEVELT HIGHWAY. CINC REPORTED THAT THE PANAMANIAN MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BOYD-ROOSEVELT HIGHWAY UNLESS THE U.S. WOULD AGREE TO REPAIR ONE PART WHICH WAS NOT UP TO STANDARDS. ARMY FACILITY ENGINEERS WERE EXAMINING THE PROBLEM WHICH APPEARED TO BE A BROKEN CULVERT WHICH HAD CAUSED THE ROAD TO SINK IN ONE SECTOR. THE U.S. WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT PROBLEM. WORK WILL BEGIN AUG. 25.

7. CONTINGENCY PLAN. MEMBERS OF THE PRC ALL HAD SPECIFIC AND CONFIDENTIAL

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GENERAL CHANGES IN THE DRAFT CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR INTERIM ACTIONS. THESE WOULD BE COORDINATED PRIOR TO THE NEXT PRC MEETING. THE PRINCIPALS AGREED THAT WHILE THERE MIGHT BE SOME VALUE IN INTERIM ACTIONS DURING A PERIOD OF PROTRACTED NEGOTIATIONS, WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO GIVE AWAY NEGOTIATING COUNTERS DURING THIS PERIOD. HOWEVER, SHOULD TREATY NEGOTIATIONS BREAK DOWN OR THE SENATE REJECT A TREATY AND THE EXPECTED CRISIS RESULTS, NO INTERIM ACTIONS WOULD BE EFFECTIVE. POSSIBLY AFTER A PERIOD OF CONFRONTATION WHEN

BOTH SIDES ARE PREPARING TO RE-ENTER NEGOTIATIONS, SOME ACTIONS
MIGHT BE USEFUL AS EVIDENCE OF GOOD FAITH.

8. VESEY VISIT. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY VICTOR V.
VEYSEY IS PLANNING TO VISIT PANAMA IN LATE SEPTEMBER OR EARLY
OCTOBER.

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